anything for them. It is nothing for them. Therefore, will the Minister consider making special efforts to develop these areas? You know that the North-Eastern terrain is such that people cannot move easily. If there is a telephone connection, it will help them. Therefore, my question is a very ordinary question. You have to apply your mind to see to it that special care of this area is taken. This is my first question.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is not an ordinary question. That is why I am saying that special emphasis will be given to the Eastern Zone. The all-India average tele-density is 1.84. Even that is not very satisfactory. But the tele-density in the Eastern Zone is only 0.73. We have to remove this disparity. While answering the first question I had said it and I had assured the House through the hon. Chairman that we will give special emphasis to remove these disparities.

SHRI E. BALANANDAN: My second question is this, Sir. The Government of India, I am told, is doing corporatisation of DOT. We all know that in 1964 the Government enunciated the policy of privatisation with so many norms. I find that today not a single private operator has come and started anything. Connecting distant areas with telephones connections is a social function, especially those areas where economic conditions are not favourable. We are as a nation interested in serving all the backward areas. Therefore, this attempt at privatisation, or rather corporatisation, will stop our growth. So, will the Minister kindly consider it? Don't go by generalisations. The telecommunication sector is a vital sector. It is a defence-related sector. Kindly, don't give it to the private sector. This is my request. What is your response?

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Privatisation of DOT is an entirely separate question, which needs a separate notice. But I can certainly answer with your permission, Sir, that corporatisation of DOT has not been decided as yet. It has been only under active consideration. So far as private operators are concerned, private operators were given licences in six Circles for basic telephones.

Only one will start and that too in the first week of June. I think that will start the day after tomorrow. But corporatisation of DOT or non-corporatisation of DOT, we will not lack in giving facilities to the Eastern region, specially to the North-East. The hon. Member should not express such kind of concern. The DOT will go in full swing to remove this disparity of the Eastern zone, whether DOT is corporatised or not corporatised.

SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Sir, I would like to know from the Minister whether a specific number of telephone connections have already been decided in favour of Meghalaya State. I would also like to know about the number of telephone exchanges proposed to be opened in Meghalaya during 1998-99.

SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ: Sir, I have got a list with me which shows cumulative number about the North-East, not of Meghalaya. But, if the hon. Member wants. I can send him detail of proposed telephone connections and telephone exchanges for the State of Meghalaya.

External Assistance for Port Projects

***84. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:**

(a) whether some development projects in the Port Sector are being implemented in the country with external assistance;

(b) if so, what are those projects, port-wise;

(c) the amount of external aid obtained by Government for the projects so far, year-wise; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the table of Rajya Sabha.

Statement

Projects under implementation through external loan assistance from Asian Development Bank

S. No.	Name of the Port	Name of Project	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Crores)	Amount of Loan (in US $ M.)
1.	Paradip	Mechanical Coal Handling facilities	587.65	134.85
2.	Chennai	Construction of a new Port at Ennore	593.90	150.15

Year-wise details of the amount of external aid obtained

(Rs. in crores)

S. No.	Name of the Project	UP to 1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	TOTAL
1.	Mechanical Coal Handling facilities at Paradip Port.	8.69	7.00	22.90	44.68	83.27
2.	Ennore Coal Port Project at Chennai Port	3.60	8.11	28.57	49.82	90.10
	TOTAL	12.29	15.11	51.47	94.50	173.37

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Mr. Chairman,Sir, the answer to the first and second part of the quetion is this. Yes, Sir, there are two projects viz mechanical coal handling facility at Paradip port and construction of a new port at Ennore, near Chennai port. These are on-going projects and funded through external assistance from ADB.

SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Sir, the hon. Minister has replied to my question. The project for mechanical coal handling at Paradip had been taken up in the year 1994-95. The estimated cost of the project was Rs. 587.65 crores. Till date, the Government has spent only Rs. 83.27 crores. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government has any intention to complete this project and facilitate my State in coal handling.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as the hon. Member said the project cost was Rs. 587.41 crores. As far as the external assistance is concerned, we have so far got Rs. 83.27 crores from ADB to implement this project. Actually, up to March, 1998, we have already spent Rs. 158 crores. We are taking all effective steps to complete the project at an early date. We are thinking that it will be completed by April, 2000. The delay in completing this project occurred due to problems such as litigations in respect of some award of contracts, delay in approval of drawings by the Railways, rebidding of some packages as per the advice of the ADB. Sir, now we are making all efforts to see that the project is completed at an early date.

SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Sir, I would like to know whether the port has started loading coal mechanically to Madras.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, the project is not yet fully complete. I will get the information and give it to the hon. Member.

Shifting of foreign department of State Bank of India

*85. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the move of the State Bank of India to shift foreign department of the Bank from Calcutta to Mumbai; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

State Bank of India (SBI) have reported that there is no move to shift Foreign Department of the Bank from Calcutta to Mumbai. SBI have further reported that with a view to enhance the competitiveness of the bank, it has become necessary to integrate the Foreign Exchange and the domestic treasury operations envisaging in the process the undertaking of some dealing room functions from Mumbai instead of from Calcutta as at present. Government feel that the places from which certain activities are to be undertaken by the banks should be decided by the banks themselves having regard to their best commercial interests.

SHRI R. JANARTHANAM: Sir, there is no move by the State Bank of India to shift the Foreign Exchange Department from Calcutta to Mumbai. But, some operations relating to financial currencies, only sale and purchase of foreign currencies have been moved to Mumbai. This is done by all the Indian banks. All the banks, foreign corporate companies as also large Indian corporate houses, deal in sizeable foreign exchange operations from Mumbai only. The market in Mumbai, over a period of time, has become the main centre for dealings in foreign exchange. The Government, therefore, feels that this issue should be decided by the banks themselves. As banks themselves are looking into their own commercial interests, the banks are doing this thing also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Question Hour is over. Now, Papers to be laid on the Table.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Functioning of Silchar Doordarshan Kendra

*86. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of widespread discontentment in the Barak Valley over poor standard of functioning of Silchar Doordarshan Kendra, which being in border area is supposed to be particularly efficient to resist any possible cultural aggression likely to be waged by T.V. centres of neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to improve the standared of programmes as well as the extension of the duration of programmes considering its border area importance; and

(c) why is Government procreastinating in arranging the daily telecast of local news in bengali from this centre despite persistent demand for the same?